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# SIS PROJECT UPDATE

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*Note: For background information on the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) Project in RI check out previous articles on the Department's website.)*

## **August 27, 2008 SIS Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Sue Babin, Administrator, DDD, welcomed everyone to today's first meeting of the **SIS Project Advisory Committee**. The department of MHRH's website had included an article to recruit people for participation on the SIS Advisory Committee in addition to an email sent by MHRH acting director Craig Stenning to all agencies requesting volunteers for participation on the Committee. Everyone who had volunteered to participate have been selected as a member with the exception of only one individual representing an agency. *(In a couple of cases agencies had requested more than one person to participate.)* Sue stated that the Committee includes a "very good representation of various advocacy, provider and family agencies and organizations from the DD community." She also mentioned that the department's website will be including articles and information on the status of the SIS Project in an effort to keep people informed of the Project's activities.

## Project Implementation Status



Sarah Taub, from the *Human Services Research Institute (HSRI)*, presented a brief overview of the SIS Pilot Project including a description of the purpose and goals of the SIS Project, the general workplan, role of the advisory committee and information on the current status and anticipated timelines of the project. Sarah stated that one of the key roles of the Committee will be to “*help to advise the activities of this project to be tailored to the needs of RI.*”

Dave Duke, Programmer/Analyst, Information Technology, DOA, explained that he has developed a process using an excel format for the random selection of approximately 600 names of individuals from the Division’s data base of people over the age of 21 and people receiving services from the Division. These individuals will be people who will be asked to participate in the SIS Interview. More than 500 names are being randomly selected to account for individuals who cannot participate in the SIS Interview for health or other reasons.



Kevin Mchale and Deb Kney, from Advocates in Action, offered suggestions that information sent to people with disabilities about the SIS Interview should be:

- **simple and easy to understand,**
- **interesting for people,**
- **in a clear format, and**
- **include some graphics or pictures relating to the different question areas.**

Pictures could also be used by the interviewers to make the process of the interview easier for people to understand. Linda Ward suggested that a letter be sent by the Division to each person randomly selected encouraging them to participate and talk about their lives with the interviewers. Discussion took place on other ideas to present the information so that people will not feel threatened by the interview but rather see it as an opportunity to talk about what they need and what is really important to them. Advocates in Action offered to help put some of this information together. Sue Babin will check with AAIDD to see how other states have done this and whether they used a “script” for consistency on information given to people with disabilities to maximize their participation.



The Division will be providing HSRI with additional information on each of the 500 individuals participating in the SIS Interviews including:

- Names of provider agencies
- Types of services received (day, residential, family support, etc.)
- Funding level and authorization
- Completed PCI's
- Claims for payment of services for FY 2007

## SIS Format



Discussion took place on the various components of the *SIS Interview and Profile Form* relating to the questions included within the Support Needs Scale, Supplemental Protection and Advocacy Scale and the Exceptional Medical and Behavioral Support Needs. Sue Babin stated that there is an opportunity for RI to add or revise questions within the tool if members of the Advisory

Committee want to make suggestions/recommendations. A number of people

commented that it will be helpful to add in additional questions relating to the specific health needs of people, specifics of where people live (at home with families, in apartments, group homes, Shared Living, etc.), employment, transportation needs, etc. Sue mentioned that other states that have used the SIS have developed additional questions that have been added to the interview tool. Linda Ward commented that it may be useful to add questions that give people an opportunity to talk about what's really important to them such as... "*What is really important to you?*" and "*What is really important for you?*" It was agreed by the Committee that it would make sense to see copies of these questions from other states and determine if the questions are appropriate to add for RI. Sue will get this information from AAIDD and send it to Committee members.

## SIS Interviewers



Sue Babin stated that people participating in the project as SIS interviewers will be trained by staff from AAIDD. The training is scheduled for the week of September 22, 2008 and will consist of a full orientation day, a half day *Guided Practice Interview* (interviewers will be divided into groups of 4-5 persons and the staff from AAIDD will interview a person with a disability and provide opportunities for each interviewer to

also ask some of the questions with guidance from the AAIDD staff person), and a two hour feedback meeting.

Each interviewer will then independently interview four individuals with disabilities within the next three weeks. Staff from AAIDD will review each of the completed interviews for validity and reliability and determine if the interview is acceptable. Individuals who complete four interviews satisfactorily will be able to continue with this project and go on to interview another 20-25 persons. People who do not complete four interviews satisfactorily will not



continue with the project. Sue stated that AAIDD has criteria they use to make this determination. Mitch Dondey and other members asked how AAIDD assesses whether an interview is accurate given that in some cases the person with a disability may answer questions with good information and in other cases the information may not be reflective of the person's needs. In some situations a person's responses may be different than a family member's response. Sue commented that she would ask for more information from AAIDD on the process and criteria they use to do this.

## Next Steps

Tom Kane asked whether the intent of the project would be to eventually adopt the SIS and use the format on all people in the system. Sue Babin stated that the Advisory Committee will have opportunities to review the status of project activities and to provide a lot of comment to the department. Craig Stenning stated that the work being completed through this project will be critical work that is extremely important to the department and the future of the DD system in RI. The goal is to *"establish a consistent budget/resource allocation process that is the most equitable system possible for all people."* Other states that have implemented similar projects have established a transition period of three to five years to phase in new rate structures so that people and agencies have sufficient time to plan for any rate changes that may affect them.



Staff from HSRI will be meeting the week of September 15, 2008 with staff from DDD to identify financial data that will be necessary to review along with information from the completed SIS interviews. The Division has an internal team of staff that will be responsible for overseeing this project. The team includes Joe Gould, Amy Vincenzi, Dave Duke, Sue Hayward, Stephanie Horridge and Sue Babin. A project team leader from the Division has not been determined yet given the upcoming retirements of some staff from the Division. Craig Stenning will identify the lead staff within the next few weeks.

The Committee agreed to meet monthly. The next meeting in September will focus on the components of the SIS training and additional questions that RI will consider to add to the SIS interview.

## **SIS Advisory Committee Members**

**Kevin McHale, Advocates in Action**  
**Deb Kney, Advocates in Action**  
**Sue Donovan, RIPIN**  
**Doreen McConaghy, PAL**  
**Donna Martin, CPNRI**  
**Tom Kane, Cranston Arc**  
**Linda Ward, Opportunities Unlimited**  
**Claire Rosenbaum, Sherlock Center**  
**John Susa, RI Developmental Disabilities Council**  
**Chris Gadbois, Homestead Group**  
**Pat Fiske, COVE Center**  
**Pat Shurtleff, Project Friends**  
**Ken Sundberg, Family member**  
**Rob Mann, NERMS**  
**Mitch Dondey, Trudeau Center**  
**Lisa Rafferty, Bridges**  
**Jeanne Letoile, RICLAS**  
**Patricia Romeo, Mentor**  
**Stephanie Horridge, DDD**  
**Joe Gould, DDD**  
**David Duke, DOA**  
**Amy Vincenzi, DDD**  
**Sue Hayward, DDD**  
**Sue Varon, DDD**  
**Sue Babin, DDD**  
**Elaina Nicollella, MHRH**

This article was written by MHRH staff Sue Babin.

*Note: Photographs included in this article were taken by Deb Kney and Sue Babin.*